



**Broadcast Educational Media Commission
Engineering and Broadcast Operations Committee
Meeting Minutes
2470 North Star Road, Columbus, OH 43221
October 06, 2022**

- I. **Call to Order:** At 1:10 p.m., Mr. Dole opened the meeting of the Broadcast Educational Media Commission's Engineering & Broadcast Operations committee.

- A. **Roll Call:** At 1:10 p.m., roll call was conducted by Mrs. Gage.

Members Present:

Committee Chairman Matt Dole
Commissioner Christine Merritt

Members Absent:

Commissioner Geoffrey Andrews

Also Present in the Meeting:

BEMC Chairman Robert Smith;
BEMC Commissioner Sandi Thompson;
Executive Director Geoffrey A. Phillips;
Craig Stevenson, Chief of Engineering and Broadcast Operations Officer;
Alina Gage, Chief Financial Officer;

Also Present Virtually:

Eric Wortman, Engineering Manager;
Josh Sorden, Broadcast Operations Manager;
Laura Bryson, Chief Information Officer;

and Interested Citizens:

Kitty Lensman, President and General Manager of WPTD/WCET/WPTO;
Kevin Martin, President and CEO of ideastream;
Tina Hebel, Senior Manager of ThinkTV/WCET; (confirm)
Mark Brewer, General Manager of WOUB;
Marlon Kiser, President and CEO of WGTE;
Dan Niedzwiecki, Chief Engineer of WGTE;
Trina Cutter, President and CEO of Western Reserve Public Media;
Tony Dennis, Chief Technology Officer of Western Reserve Public Media;
;
David Carwile, Administrator of Ohio Educational Television Stations, Inc;

John Luff, Television Technology Consultant;
And Willy Halla, HA Design

B. Committee Action Items:

Resolution 23-19: Motion to Approve July 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes

1:11p.m. – Ms. Merritt moved for approval of the July 14, 2022 meeting minutes. Mr. Dole seconded. The motion passed via unanimous voice vote.

II. Overview of Advance Materials

- A. Ex. Dir. Phillips introduced the guests in the room and provided an overview of the advance materials shared prior to the meeting and available on the website (broadcast.ohio.gov).
- B. Mr. Dole shared why these meetings are taking place. It is to ensure the JMC is the most responsible and sustainable it can be. Those not using the JMC can provide insight to achieve that goal.

III. Responses to Survey

- A. Mr. Dole opened a discussion about the responses from Ohio Public Broadcasting television stations not using the Joint Master Control (JMC).
 - 1. Mr. Martin shared there are some General Manager's that were not involved with the implementation on the JMC, but he was involved in other JMC's. Those were in excess of \$10m each (Florida and New York in Mr. Martin's previous role at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting). Deciding factors of not using the Ohio JMC were technical issues in the beginning and the amount of effort it would take to resolve those issues. BEMC's team was trying to roll out service quickly not accurately. Quality issues caused ideastream to need customer service representatives to field questions. Lastly, the biggest concern was the culture at BEMC. ideastream needs to be responsive to audiences and FCC whereas BEMC does not. Mr. Martin also said he understands that as technology improves and costs go down, it changes the economic viability of stations to have their own master control.
 - i. Mr. Dole asked if Mr. Martin feels that ideastream is treated differently because they do not participate in the JMC. Mr. Martin asserted yes because of function. Mr. Dole clarified that relationships are not affected due to not being a member. Mr. Martin shared that relationships are not affected.
 - ii. Mr. Dole asked about FCC and legal issues mentioned in the survey responses. Mr. Martin responded it was disruption of the service and the length of the disruption. Mr. Dole referenced the disruption rate at the commission meeting and if that was an acceptable rate. Mr. Martin stated it was acceptable in terms of proficiency and accuracy. The responsiveness improved greatly after roll-out leading him to believe the aggressiveness of the roll -out was the original culprit.
 - iii. Mr. Dole asked if ideastream carried The Ohio channel 24/7. Mr. Martin affirmed this.
 - iv. Mr. Dole asked about Mr. Martin's involvement in JMC in New York and Florida. Mr. Martin said he did a comparison of the trade-off's or sacrifices

of the Ohio \$3m JMC and the other states at \$10m JMC's. It is not just the features offered but the commitment made by stations to use the JMC.

- v. Mr. Dole asked about using the JMC for redundancy and noted that offering a redundant service will require resources to serve that function. Mr. Martin said redundancy is key to ensuring service to customers.
 - vi. Ms. Merritt asked where BEMC stands now, if the concept of JMC works. Mr. Martin replied that it does work in NY and FL. The biggest difference is those JMC's are wholly owned by the stations. He is concerned that Ohio's JMC is a state agency subject the whim of government politics and funding.
 - vii. Ms. Merritt asked if there are things that BEMC can be doing to support stations that it is not. Mr. Martin said yes, if the question is beyond JMC. Each station services the community the best it can with limited resources. Station needs are different, and the assistance needed depends on the community served. Ms. Merritt clarified, from ideastream's perspective, Mr. Martin does not need the JMC, but what other services can be offered that would be useful. Mr. Martin said he could come up with a long list if BEMC had the funding. Administration of OGT and SNB means ideastream is tethered closely to BEMC through those channels. Any station that administers those channels will have to have close ties with BEMC. Conversion of analog to digital was a good example of stations and BEMC working together.
 - viii. Chairman Smith asked about spending more time at the commission level to help Ohioan's advance knowledge and asked for input from Mr. Martin going forward.
2. Mr. Brewer of WOUB clarified what the Spectrum auction meant based on what was said at previous committee meetings. Only a portion of those funds were kept by WOUB for some essential projects (encoders, radio automation, vehicles...). WOUB did struggle with the technology during the time and how it would work to add channels. There was a cost to build out WOUB to join the JMC. WOUB master control went online in 2019. It is difficult to compare NY and FL to Ohio because BEMC is a state agency, and the others are not. Concerns over state funding led WOUB to believe it was not a solid plan.
- i. Mr. Dole asked about 24/7 Ohio channel airing. Mr. Brewer stated WOUB carries The Ohio Channel during the day opting to carry a repeat of PBS primary programming from the previous day in the evenings.
 - ii. Mr. Dole asked if he was treated differently because WOUB is not a JMC user. Mr. Brewer said yes, starting with a MOU statement that stations must use JMC to receive state subsidy.
 - iii. Mr. Dole said there is a paragraph that matches the response from ideastream and asked why that was. Mr. Brewer said he created his and shared with BEMC and fellow GM's.
 - iv. Mr. Dole asked about plans for radio JMC. Mr. Stevenson said originally BEMC provided satellite uplink to NPR. NPR moved to Content Depot that uploaded the feed to stations directly. Funding became short and because

Content Depot was direct, the decision was made to use that. Mr. Brewer said Mr. Stevenson was correct with the change to Content Depot.

- v. Ms. Merritt asked if there is a scenario where a JMC can work with a state agency as an organizing entity. Mr. Brewer responded it technically could work. There are risks involved as a state agency. He does not know if there is a plan if BEMC goes away. Culturally, there are differences that impact communication (terminology). Ms. Merritt asked if there are things BEMC can provide that would support WOUB. Mr. Brewer said yes but is not prepared to offer a list right now. He stated the staff at BEMC is top notch and has no issues talking about services that can be of future use. Mr. Brewer made differentiation between primary channels and pass-through channels.
- vi. Chairman Smith complimented the committee for identifying gaps in the process. He commented on the idea of relying on a state agency.
- 3. Ms. Cutter of WNEO explained her decision was based on business needs. WNEO is unique as a private 501C and must act as a private business. They are not using the JMC because it does not fit into business and operational necessities.
 - i. Mr. Dole asked if she feels the station is being treated differently for not using the JMC. She said yes and referenced the funding language in the MOU. She addressed it, but felt the complaint fell on deaf ears. There was no cooperation to transfer to the Cinegy system, and she feels it was punitive because WNEO is not in the JMC. WNEO uses software not compatible with the JMC.
 - a. Tony Dennis responded to the software question. WNEO does use same Cinegy software now. Most of the difficulty was with the Pro Track Hub and Spoke system WNEO was using. Pro-Track supplier (Myers) said it could be made compatible with a large amount of customization.
 - b. Mr. Dole asked if redundancy would be of interest to WNEO. Mr. Dennis said yes, but a customized solution would be necessary.
 - ii. Ms. Merritt asked about the services WNEO is currently using from BEMC. (The diversity site, last mile connections to OARnet, and OGT). Ms. Cutter responded The Ohio Channel is only shown in one 8-hour block to differentiate between the stations and avoid simulcasting with WVIZ.
 - a. Ex. Dir. Phillips added there was a satellite issue in Dayton, which WNEO was able to help with, highlighting the diversity sites use.
 - iii. Ms. Merritt asked if there are things BEMC could do to help WNEO. Ms. Cutter stated no, because WNEO doesn't want to increase dependence on state or federal support.
 - a. Chairman Smith stated there are other ways to support stations, not just financial. Ms. Cutter added an important thing that can be done is commission independent studies (like the CPB does) to understand where broadcasting is going.
- 4. Ms. Lensman added ThinkTV broadcasts 13 channels, pass throughs go through BEMC, and primary channels are managed locally. ThinkTV maintains a full-time master control staff. Efficiency isn't what the station is looking for. Ms. Lensman

supports the stations that use the JMC fully. She would like to see the JMC as a service to all, not potential leverage for funding.

- i. Mr. Dole asked if ThinkTV is being treated differently for not using the JMC. She stated she does not feel that ThinkTV is treated differently.
- ii. Mr. Dole asked if ThinkTV could use JMC as a redundancy. Ms. Lensman replied that technical hoops would exist, but it could be done.
 - a. Ex. Dir. Phillips shared ThinkTV does have compatible Pro-Track Hub and Spoke system so redundant service is possible.
- iii. Mr. Dole asked about airing OGT 24/7. She said ThinkTV is not; only 8-hour blocks.
- iv. Mr. Dole asked if there are FCC challenges to working with BEMC. She said no, it all goes back to the viewer.
- v. Ms. Merritt asked if the graphics and bug issue was insurmountable. Mr. Stevenson said no, there is an upgrade available. Additional work is required to implement it and conversations are ongoing with integrator to make that happen.
- vi. Ms. Lensman asked about the capacity of the JMC. Ex. Dir. Phillips responded it is currently 42 channels with the option to expand.
- vii. Ms. Merritt asked if there are other ways to collaborate with BEMC. Ms. Lensman said yes and asked what the commission thinks they can offer. She mentions the studies suggested by Ms. Cutter, asked for more collaboration and communication.
- viii. Chairman Smith said the committee should state the commission does not intend to charge for the JMC and does not intend to use funding as leverage for those that do not use the service.

IV. **Recommendations Meeting**

- A. Mr. Dole reminded the committee the next meeting will occur on November 3, 2022 to decide recommendations to make to the commission in regards to the JMC.

V. **Adjournment**

Resolution 23-18: Motion for Adjournment:2:45 p.m. –M. Dole adjourned the meeting without dissent.

Matt Dole, Committee Chairman
Engineering and Broadcast Operations
Broadcast Educational Media Commission

Date